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ABSTRACT

A study profiled college radio stations and explored the feasibility of a college radio network. A mail survey was sent in April 1995 to 1,469 college radio stations (including broadcast stations, carrier current stations, closed-circuit campus stations, radiating cable FM, and cable television access stations). A total of 228 surveys were returned for a response rate of 16%. Results indicated that 66% of the stations had done some type of audience research, with 34.7% of those using the Arbitron ratings or some other industry standard; 64% had done a station survey themselves and 26.7% had had a non-station survey conducted for them. Regarding respondents' interest in carrying out an audience survey, 21% said it was a top priority and 47% are considering it. Among other results: 68% of respondents were restricted by their licenses from running commercials, which compared with nearly 13% who had no restrictions whatsoever on running commercials; only about 4% reported that they were restricted by institutional policy from running any underwriting, and 61% reported no restrictions on underwriting. Results also indicated that over 21% of respondents were extremely interested and 49% had some interest in professional quality made available to them through a satellite network. Findings suggest that over 70% of the respondents were FCC licensed, operating in the 100 to 3,000 watt range, and over half of the broadcast stations operated at least 12 hours per day, 365 days a year. (CR)

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National College Radio Study:

Audience Research and National Programming

Prepared for
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Running head: COLLEGE RADIO STUDY

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NATIONAL COLLEGE RADIO STUDY:
AUDIENCE RESEARCH AND NATIONAL PROGRAMMING

> As a culture, college radio actually reflects the current climate on the campus. As an outlet for the student population, it acts as a venue into the campus itself. The college radio station offers a true alternative to programming not commercially available or viable. The best indicator of this trend is the programming of alternative music that reflects the diverse life styles of a "college culture." Additionally, the "open format" utilized at the majority of college stations also distinguishes them from their commercial counterparts. (Sauls, 1995, April 14)

With the idea that college radio stations exhibit a wide range of characteristics, capabilities, programming ideals, and levels of technical sophistication, the National Association of College Broadcasters (NACB) undertook a study to further profile these stations. As their 1995 College Radio Survey, the NACB specifically attempted to solicit input concerning student reach of college stations, the degree to which audience research is desired or has been

carried out, and the level of attraction college stations have towards national programming. (NACB, 1995) In the context of focused research, the study raised the question as to the viability of satellite delivered services specific to college radio. In particular, the exploration and feasibility of a "college radio network" was purported throughout the study.

Methodology

The questionnaire, designed to provide information to profile college radio stations and to explore the feasibility of a college radio network, was developed as a mail survey. Surveys were mailed during the week of April 14, 1995, to 1,469 college radio stations (including broadcast stations, carrier current stations, closed-circuit campus stations, radiating cable FM, and cable television access stations) as potential respondents.

A cover letter requesting participation and describing the purpose of the study was sent with each survey. Respondents were encouraged to return the survey to NACB in an enclosed postage-paid business reply envelope or via facsimile (fax). As an incentive, two early respondents were randomly chosen to receive gifts. A follow-up call to potential respondents requesting their participation was

made two weeks after the mailing to improve the response rate.

A total of 228 surveys were returned by early July 1995 for a response rate of 16 percent. The sample size yielded a ± 5 percent margin of error at the 90 percent confidence interval. This means that the reader can be 90 percent sure that the responses of the sample represented the population within plus or minus five percent. (The margin of error increased when responses to the questions were segmented by sub-groups within the sample.)

Under the direction of Mark MacLeod, Executive Director of the National Association of College Broadcasters, the study was prepared utilizing the survey design and data analysis coordination provided by Samuel J. Sauls of the Department of Radio, Television and Film at the University of North Texas. Dr. Sauls' research areas have concentrated on college radio and, thus, the NACB was able to capitalize on his expertise. Of particular interest was Dr. Sauls' previous work in survey research methodology utilized in the study of college radio. (see Sauls, 1993) Furthermore, Dr. Sauls volunteered his work on the study, thereby allowing for additional unbiased input. Data entry, data interpretation, and final report generation for the study

was carried out by Paul Ruggiere and Aditi Sen of the Survey Research Center also at the University of North Texas.

Findings

The study provided data relating to respondent characteristics, station types, operating schedules, available audience research, commercial and underwriting policies, national programming interests, and satellite equipment issues. This paper summarizes findings to highlight general features brought forth by the study. Additionally, selected correlations are provided to further exhibit possible traits inherent to college radio.

Audience Research

Respondents (n=228) were asked several questions regarding audience research conducted for the station or by the station. Sixty-six percent of the respondents reported that they have done some type of audience research. When those who had done research (n=150) were asked the type of research conducted, 34.7 percent replied that they had utilized the Arbitron ratings (or some other industry standard) for audience information. Sixty-four percent had done a station survey themselves, and 26.7 percent had a non-station survey conducted for them. Of note, several stations performed more that one type of survey.

Respondents were also asked how interested they would be in carrying out an audience survey (see Table 1). Twenty-one percent responded that an audience survey was one of their top priorities, while forty-seven percent of the respondents think an audience survey would be useful and are considering conducting one.

Table 1
Interest in Carrying Out an Audience Survey
(n=202)

Interest in survey	Percentage Responding
An Audience Survey is a Top Priority	20.8
Considering an Audience Survey	47.0
May Conduct a Survey in the Future	26.7
An Audience Survey is Not a Priority	5.4

The estimates for the percentage of students who receive the stations by enrollment size category were all above 85 percent of the students (see Table 2). Eighty-six to 95 percent of the students were estimated to receive the stations as compared to 37 to 49 percent for the percentage of students who were estimated to tune in at least once a week.

Table 2
Student Listening Rates

Number of Students[1]	Percentage of Students Receiving Station	Percentage Listening at Least Once a Week
2,500 or less (n=57/49)	95.4%	49.2%
2,501 to 5,000 (n=26/20)	89.2	36.7
5,001 to 10,000 (n=23/13)	88.8	41.2
10,001 to 20,000 (n=30/19)	86.1	37.6
Over 20,000 (n=20/14)	88.0	39.6

Commercial and Underwriting Policies

All respondents were presented a list of policies for running commercials and underwriting. The list ranged from complete restriction on all commercials or all underwriting to no restrictions on underwriting or commercials. Respondents could check all responses that applied to them.

Table 3 shows that 68 percent of the respondents were restricted by their licenses from running commercials. This compared to nearly 13 percent who had no restrictions whatsoever on running commercials.

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[1]Percentages in each cell of Column 2 were calculated by averaging the number of students receiving the station divided by the total enrollment of each school. Percentages in each cell of Column 3 were calculated by averaging the number of students tuning in at least once a week divided by the total enrollment.

Table 3
Range of Commercial Policies[2]
(n=228)

Commercial Policy	Percentage Responding
Restricted by license from running any commercial spots	68.4%
Restricted by institutional policy from running any commercial spots	14.5
Limited by institutional policy to running some commercial spots	2.6
Restricted by internal/org. policy from running any commercial spots	9.2
Limited by internal/organizational policy to running some commercial spots	3.5
No restriction in our running of commercial spots	12.7

Far fewer stations had limitations on their underwriting capabilities. Only about 4 percent of the respondents reported that they were restricted by institutional policy from running any underwriting. Sixty-one percent of the respondents reported that they had no restrictions on their use of underwriting (see Table 4).

[2]Since respondents could check more than one response, percentages add to more than 100 percent.

Table 4
Range of Underwriting Policies[3]
(n=228)

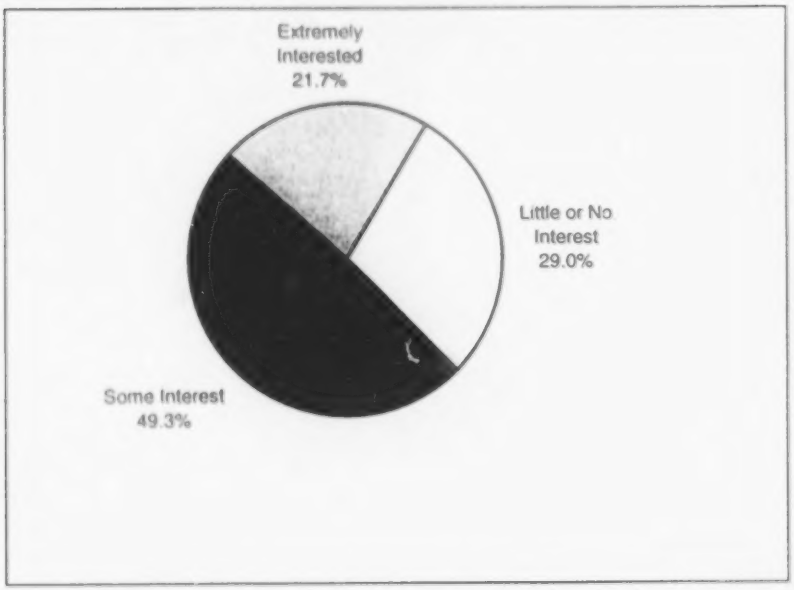
Underwriting Policy	Percentage Responding
Restricted by institutional policy from running any underwriting	3.9%
Limited by institutional policy to running some underwriting	9.2
Restricted by internal/organizational policy from running any underwriting	.9
Limited by internal/organizational policy to running some underwriting	9.6
No restriction in our use of underwriting	60.5

National Programming

Respondents were asked to indicate their degree of interest in student-produced/oriented music, talk and special event programming if such professional quality programming were made available to them through a satellite network. As Figure 1 shows, over 21 percent of the respondents were extremely interested and over 49 percent reported that they have some interest.

[3]Since some respondents did not answer any of the underwriting questions, responses do not add to 100 percent.

Figure 1
Interest in National Programming
(n-221)

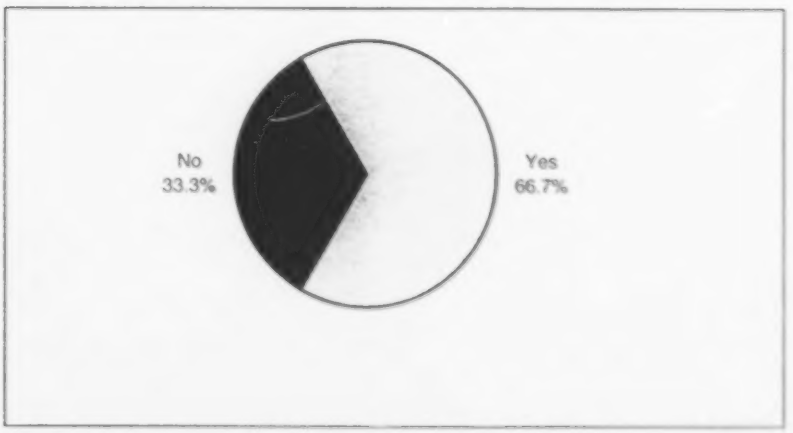


Respondents were also asked directly why they had extreme, some, or little or no interest in national programming. While overall responses varied greatly, over half of the respondents who reported "extreme" interest and nearly one-third of the respondents giving reasons why they had "some" interest cited that diversity in programming was the reason why they were interested in national programming.

Finally, lack of need was cited most often by respondents who reported little or no interest in national programming.

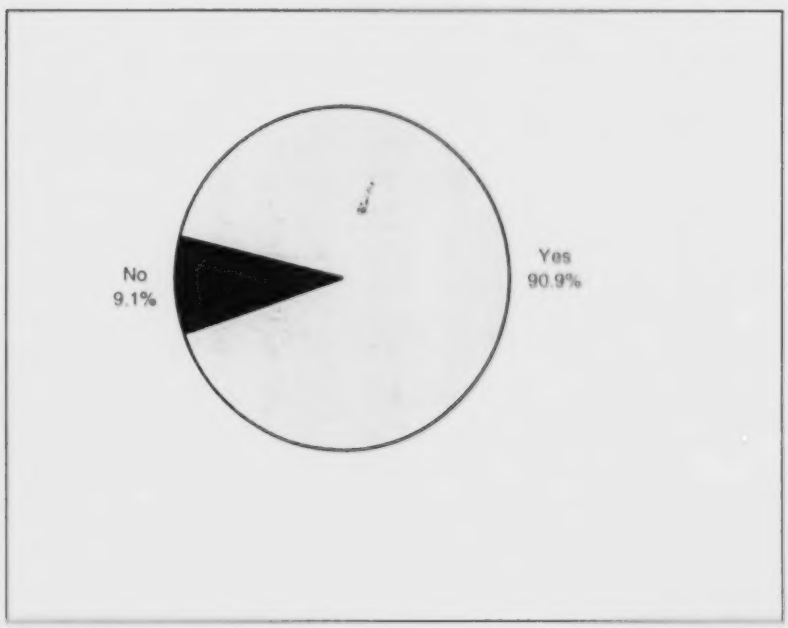
Respondents who indicated some interest or little or no interest in national programming were asked if their degree of interest would change if they were provided with some of the satellite equipment required to receive national satellite programming. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents reported that their degree of interest would change if the equipment were provided (see Figure 2). Eighty-three percent of the respondents with some interest and over 42 percent of the respondents with little or no interest reported that their degree of interest would change if the equipment were provided.

Figure 2
Degree of Interest in National Programming Would Change if Satellite Equipment Were Provided (n=144)



Respondents who were interested in national programming and who were not restricted from running commercials or underwriting were asked if they would consider running a regular schedule of "spots" if it were a required condition for receiving national programming. Overwhelmingly, over 90 percent of the respondents reported that they would be willing to run commercials or underwriting (see Figure 3).

Figure 3
Willingness to Run Commercial or Underwriting Spots if Required
(n=132)



Respondents interested in national programming were also asked to list the types of programs that they would like to air. Once again, there were significant differences between the answers given by respondents with extreme interest compared to those with some interest (see Figure 4). Generally, a greater percentage of respondents with extreme interest would like to air each programming option.

To provide further results of the study, selected correlations are presented. Table 5 provides the change in the degree of interest in national programming if satellite equipment was provide by student enrollment. Table 6 presents the operating schedule of stations by number of hours available for national programming.

Figure 4
Types of National Programming Interests:
Respondents With Extreme Interest (n=48)
Compared to Respondents With Some Interest (n=109)

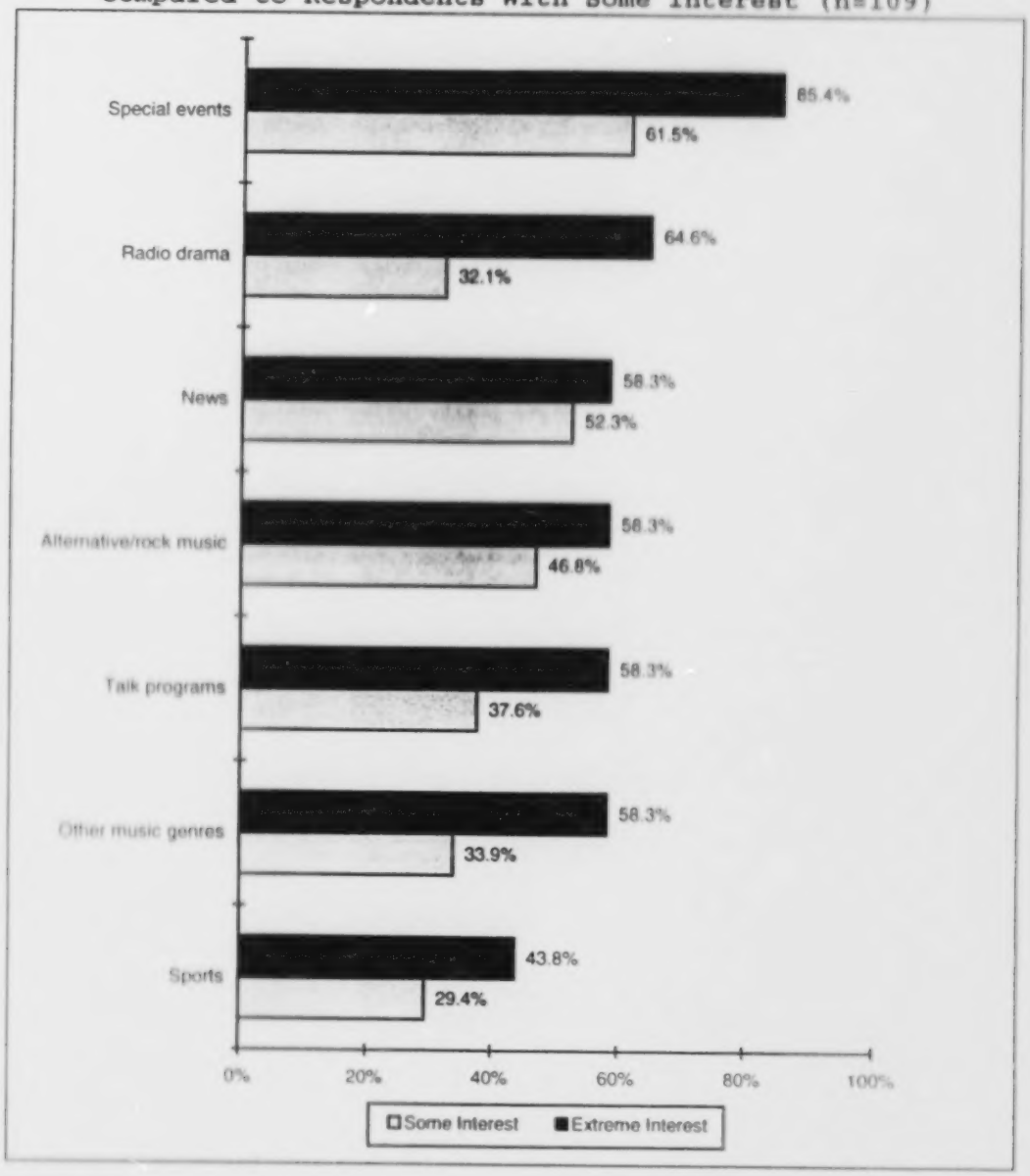


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Table 5
Degree of Interest In National Programming Would Change if Satellite Equipment Was Provided By Student Enrollment

Estimated Enrollment in Colleges and Universities	Change in degree of interest in national programming if Satellite equipment is provided (n=132)					
	Yes		*No*		*Total*	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Up to 2,500	32	66.7	16	33.3	48	100
2,501 - 5000	14	70.0	6	30.0	20	100
5001 - 10,000	12	60.0	8	40.0	20	100
10,001 - 20,000	14	66.7	7	33.3	21	100
Over 20,000	15	65.2	8	34.8	23	100

Chi-Square ($p < .98$)

Table 6
Operating Schedule of Stations by Number of Hours Available for National Programming

Operating Schedule (per day)	Maximum hours available for National Programming (n = 155)							
	5 or more hours per day		*2 - 4 hours per day*		*5 hours or less per week*		*Total*	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
24 hours	4	8.5	9	19.1	34	72.3	47	100
18-23 hours	5	11.6	13	30.2	25	58.1	43	100
12-18 hours	3	6.3	22	45.8	23	47.9	48	100
Less than 12 hours	0	0.0	7	41.2	10	58.8	17	100

Chi-Square ($p < .11$)

Discussion

Analysis of the survey data revealed several important characteristics of college radio stations and offered several considerations to those who would design a national college radio network. As stated earlier, the intent of this paper is to highlight general features brought forth by the study, and thus this discussion presents some of the general points from the study along with ramifications of the findings.

Station Characteristics

Of interest to program suppliers and network distribution potential, college radio station characteristics were brought forth in the study. Most of the stations in the sample (over 70 percent) were FCC licensed, and over half of the broadcast stations operated in the 100 to 3,000 watt range. Most of the stations operated at least 12 hours per day and over half operated 365 days a year.

Audience Research and Listenership

In order to help determine student listening habits of college radio, station audience research was analyzed in the study. Most of the stations have conducted some type of audience research. Additionally, there is an interest in

conducting more research in the future. Average estimates showed that the number of students listening to the stations at least once a week ranged from 36.7 to 49.2 percent.

Underwriting and Commercial Policies

The study provided information which could be of importance to current and potential sponsors (both underwriting and commercials) of college radio programming. Generally, stations have far fewer restrictions on running underwriting announcements than commercial spots. Specifically, 61 percent of the respondents reported that their station has no restrictions in its use of underwriting, compared to 68 percent who are restricted by its license from running commercial spots.

National Programming Interests

Of great interest to those of us in college radio, the obvious reason for stations expressing an interest in national programming via a satellite network is to fill up those early morning shows and late, late night shifts that are hard to staff. Additionally, such programming of a "professional caliber" will serve to augment already locally produced material at the college station. The study showed that there is a good deal of interest in airing student-oriented national programming. Additionally, if satellite

equipment were provided, that interest would increase. Finally, those interested in airing national programming would be willing to run commercials or underwriting if it were a required condition for receiving national programming.

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